

Serial No.: 09/274,797
Response filed April 23, 2004

Attorney's Docket No.: 10559-237001/P8886

REMARKS

Claims 37-54 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(e) as allegedly being unpatentable over Lincoln, U.S. Patent No. 6,301,226. This contention is respectfully traversed.

The telephone interview held on April 20, 2004 was greatly appreciated. In this interview, the differences between Lincoln and the present invention in terms of the timing of the processing operations were discussed. In view of the agreement reached in this interview regarding these differences, claims 37, 39, 40, 45 and 51 have been amended to more clearly articulate the differences of the claimed subject matter over the art of record. Independent claims 37, 45 and 51 are patentable based on the differences over the art of record as addressed in the interview and in the response filed on November 4, 2003. Dependent claims 38-44, 46-50 and 52-54 are patentable based on these differences and their own merits.

In view of the above amendments and remarks, and the response filed on November 4, 2003, all of the claims should be in condition for allowance. Thus, it is respectfully suggested that the current rejection is totally overcome; that none of the cited art teaches or suggests the features which are claimed, and therefore that all of these claims should be in condition for allowance. Moreover, the present amendment does not present

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new issues or require a new search as the language added to the independent claims comes from current dependent claims. A formal notice of allowance is thus respectfully requested.

Additionally, it is believed that all of the pending claims have been addressed. However, the absence of a reply to a specific issue or comment does not signify agreement with or concession of that issue or comment. Because the arguments made above may not be exhaustive, there may be reasons for patentability of any or all pending claims (or other claims) that have not been expressed. Finally, nothing in this paper should be construed as an intent to concede any issue with regard to any claim, except as specifically stated in this paper, and the amendment of any claim does not necessarily signify concession of unpatentability of the claim prior to its amendment.


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Respectfully submitted,

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